



Congressman Jon Porter

Veterans Update

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"It is the bravery and courage of our veterans that has protected our nation from foreign invaders and brought democracy to the far reaches of the world."

Did you know?

- **Nevada is home to more than 240,000 veterans**

Porter Report - Veterans

This month, our nation celebrates its 227th birthday. On July 4, 1776, America claimed its independence from England and Democracy was born. Each year on July 4, Americans celebrate that freedom and independence with barbecues, picnics, and family gatherings.

Many common Fourth of July traditions today have their roots in the celebrations of the early republic. On July 25, 1776, citizens of Williamsburg, Virginia celebrated the colonists' victory with military parades and cannons firing. One year to the day after the signing of the Declaration of Independence, Philadelphians participated in a huge celebration complete with fireworks, parades, music and the firing of cannons. By the mid 1800s, it became a United States custom to commemorate Independence Day in states and territories.

America is a nation founded on the beliefs that all are created equal and all are meant to be free. It is the bravery and courage of our veterans who have protected our nation from foreign invaders, laid down their lives in the defense of liberty, and fought to bring democracy to the far reaches of the world that keeps the ideals established in our Constitution alive today.

"The Star Spangled Banner" – America's National Anthem



During the war of 1812, the British attempted to control American shipping and other trade activities. Major George Armistead, the commander of Fort McHenry, decided in the summer of 1813 that he wanted a flag so large "the British would have no trouble seeing it from a distance. Measuring 20x42 feet in size, a flag was created with stars two feet from point to point and using 400 yards of bunting. It was this flag that, ultimately, would be memorialized as "the star-spangled banner."

The following August, British forces entered Chesapeake Bay, invaded and captured Washington, DC, burned the White House, and set their sights on Baltimore, Maryland. In September of 1814, Francis Scott Key, a young lawyer and aspiring poet, watched the British bombardment of Fort McHenry. Moved by what he had experienced, Key wrote down his observations in the form of a poem on the back of a letter he was carrying. His writing was then printed and circulated around Baltimore. As the poem gained popularity it was published in papers across the country. It was officially adopted as our National Anthem years later on March 3, 1931.

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Issue Brief: Survivor Benefit Plan

Recently I have received several letters and comments from veterans in Southern Nevada regarding the Military Survivors Benefit Plan. The Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) was created in 1972. Under SBP, a military retiree can have a portion of his or her monthly pay withheld in order to provide, after his or her death, a monthly survivor benefit to a surviving spouse or other eligible recipient.

In the 108th Congress, the Military Survivors Benefits Improvement Act of 2003, HR 548, has been introduced to improve the Survivor Benefit Plan and address the concerns of veterans. I am proud to be a cosponsor of this legislation.

As you may know, HR 548 would eliminate the reduction in Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) annuities currently faced by uniformed services survivors over the age of 62. Protecting the needs and rights of veterans is an important consideration regardless of age.

This legislation is currently pending in the House Armed Services Committee. While I am not a member of this committee, I fully support this legislation and will continue to work for Nevada's veterans on the federal level.

Funding Veterans Health Care



Funding for veterans programs is an important issue and should be a top priority for Congress. Several pieces of legislation have been introduced in the 108th Congress that I have supported to help veterans receive the best possible health care.

I am proud to be a cosponsor of both HR 58, the Keep Our Promise to America's Military Retirees Act, and HR 2318, the Assured Funding for Veterans Health Care Act of 2003.

Both of these bills help to provide funding for veterans health care services. The Keep Our Promise to America's Military Retirees Act would improve health benefits for many veterans, while the Assured Funding for Veterans Health Care Act would require the Secretary of the Treasury to make available to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs additional funding each year until 2005.

I am also continuing to work toward securing a permanent, centrally located facility for veterans in Southern Nevada to receive health care services to replace the Addeliar Guy Ambulatory Care Center.

Contact Me

Should you require additional information regarding veterans' issues, if you would like to inform me of your views, or if you require assistance with Veterans Affairs claims, please contact me anytime in either my Henderson, NV or Washington, DC offices.